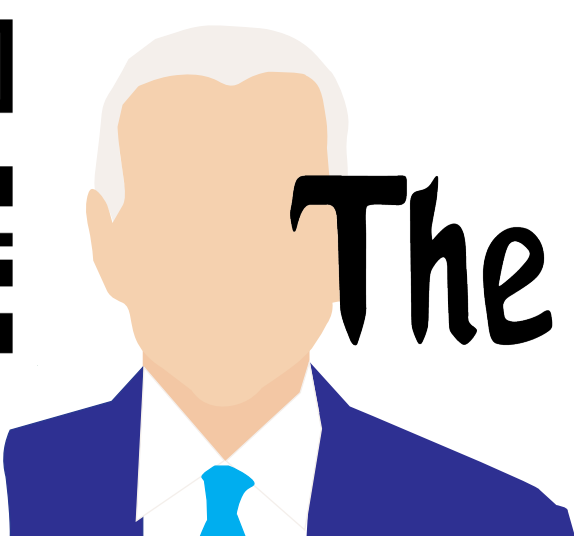




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Ypsilanti City Council's million-dollar property purchase sparks recall campaign

KORINN PERRON
NEWS REPORTER

In October 2023, Ypsilanti's City Council voted in favor of the purchase of a multi-million dollar property, passing with 5-0-1. Intended to house a new DPS facility, the site boasts a number of complications and financial uncertainties that has sparked concern for community members.

"The city is being lugged to death," Cheryl Farmer, one of the leaders in the recall campaign against Council Member Desirae Simmons, said.

As a longtime Ypsilanti resident and former mayor of the city, Farmer decided to immerse herself back into city politics when things "began going south in the neighborhood," claiming that friends began reaching out to her with concerns. She explained that the revelation of an issue began last summer when downtown Ypsilanti was experiencing an increase in rampant drug use, open-drug markets, homelessness, and violence that posed a risk to residents, businesses, and business owners.

"It was just a really, really bad situation," Farmer said.

Last fall, community members gathered at the City Council meeting in solidarity, voicing concerns about such a costly purchase.

"Absolutely no one was in favor of this deal," Farmer said. "People urged against it."

After an initial meeting and vote that violated the Open Meeting Act, this prompted a "do-over" meeting just two days later, where the bill was voted in favor. As a result, the DPS director proclaimed their resignation, followed by the assistant city clerk and a handful of DPS employees proposing to quit in unison.

The property was going to be purchased

for \$3.7 million when the current property owner had purchased it just a year earlier for \$1.1 million. Assessed by the city for \$250,000, the approximate value of the property stands around \$500,000.

Calling it a "shady" deal, Farmer claimed that the deal was brought to council by a former council member and local realtor, who stands to make \$80,000 off of this deal.

"I just can't think of any good reason why they would want to spend that kind of money when we don't even have the money," Farmer said. "The city is on the precipice of a bankruptcy."



PHOTO CREDIT: VICTORIA SMITH

"This was the tip of the iceberg," said Farmer, who was now ready to prepare to take the steps to develop a recall petition.

In a four year term, one is not eligible to recall in their first or last year, taking three council members off of the table. After two members voted against the bill, language was filed against the three members who voted in favor three times. Following a resignation, Mayor Brown's vote to rescind, and a few changed votes in opposition, there were few eligible candidates left to recall.

"Desirae just couldn't bring herself to admit that she was wrong, I guess—and that singled her out for recall," Farmer said.

Desirae Simmons, elected to council in 2022, agreed with some of the concerns over

the property, admitting that the site needs "substantial work in order to make it safe and match the needs of the site as an emergency command center," leading her to abstain in the 5-0-1 vote.

"I just didn't feel like we were getting new information," Simmons said. "I understood a lot of the concerns, and I agreed with them, so I decided I would change my vote—but I wasn't at the point where I could vote and be affirmative because I still had a lot of questions."

Uncertain of the cost to stay at the site and how it would impact Ypsilanti workers

and services, Simmons began to weigh her decisions. At this point, she was already being threatened with the recall, and the process of the petition being filed loomed over.

"I didn't feel like I could change my vote without the recall being part of the decision-making," Simmons said. "I decided that I didn't have another reason to not push for my original vote to purchase, but to also remain true to what I feel like is an ethical decision."

Simmons claims that the recall group has spread a series of misinformation to garner support for their petition, engaging in disempowerment practices and aggressive pressuring for signatures, noting that some of the landlords behind this effort are the same

landlords who sued the city in order to make sure that they were not required to provide voter information and local city contacts to renters.

"I understand they had to paint me as a corrupt politician who does shady dealings in order to get people to sign their petition," Simmons said.

Simmons added that the group blamed her for businesses closing downtown, the Growing Hope open-drug market situation, and bringing Palestine issues to Ypsilanti.

"I was going to be targeted no matter what, I put forward viewpoint, perspective, and voice of people who aren't typically being heard by the council," Simmons said. "I am very clear that I am not going to support policies that I feel are detrimental to people who have been disenfranchised and removed from the owner of decision making."

If the petitioners are able to get their signatures approved, the election in May will include a council seat for Ward 3 on the ballot. In a time of transition and statistically lower turnout, Simmons said "they're using a process that's supposed to be democratic in order to actually be anti-democratic."

On Friday, Feb. 2, the petitioners were able to submit 747 signatures, exceeding the required 603, just in time to reach the deadline for the May ballot. The county verified after a week in review that 606 of those signatures were valid. Simmons's now has 30 days to challenge the validity of these signatures.

"It brings me no joy to do this," Farmer said. "When a recall becomes necessary, it means something is going seriously wrong with your elected officials and their ability to represent the people who elected them."

The voters in Ward 3 were notified on Feb. 9 that a special election will be held on May 7 to consider the recall of Council woman Simmons.

Local Artist of the Month: Gideon the Ghost

MADISON CANTRELL
PHOTO EDITOR



GIDEON, THE CAMPUS GHOST, TYPES OUT UNIQUE ADVICE ON A TYPEWRITER AT PUMPKINS ON THE PATIO ON OCT. 31 IN THE STUDENT CENTER.

Gideon enjoys drawing, creative writing, and performance art outside of the typical ghost advice and activities. However, as a ghost, Gideon struggles to materialize his art into this world. Gideon would describe his art as "anxious and chaotic-looking."

"I give advice from experience, it's very important to me that people know that I struggle," Gideon said. "You're not talking to somebody who's speaking from a lack of painful life

Gideon the Ghost is Eastern Michigan University's friendly campus ghost who offers personal, hand-written advice to those willing to sit with him and receive it.

"I wanted to personalize little things that you'd get from engaging with me so you don't just hear somebody talk and have to retain that information, I wanted to spend the time to write out personal notes for each person," Gideon said. "It shows that you care, but it is also something that they can take with them and refer back to."

On Halloween of 2023, Gideon the Ghost began haunting Eastern Michigan University, making his first appearance in Halle Library. Later that day, he set up at Campus Life's Pumpkins on the Patio and Haunted Hallway. At both events, Gideon was well-received.

"I don't talk, because who I am doesn't matter as much as the advice itself," Gideon said. "My main goal is to be a silent ear that people can talk to, and even though I'm not a professional, I think it is important to be someone for somebody when there are people out there that don't have anybody."

experiences, you're talking to somebody who is also actively going through it and can outstretch a hand and be like 'let's go through it together.'"

Gideon aims to use his personal experiences to create art that speaks to the struggles of many college students.

"As somebody who has always dealt with his problems through his art, I realized that I could turn helping other people into an art piece itself," Gideon said. "So that's why a lot of my poems are sad or the art is scary to some or off-putting. I just really want to give the impression that I'm here for you, but I'm also on your level."

Since Halloween, Gideon has been active on his Instagram, @ghostlygideon, posting prompts via Instagram Stories and giving advice that way. Gideon has been incorporating more art into his profile and is currently working on videos to add to his grid. He is preparing and thinking about ways to get back out there and in person.



PHOTO CREDIT: MADISON CANTRELL

Vertex Coffee Roasters expands to Ypsilanti

JACK MONK
NEWS REPORTER



PHOTO CREDIT: KARA SATO

KARA SATO AND WIFE MACKENZIE SATO WITH A SIGN OF THEIR COFFEE SHOP, VERTEX COFFEE ROASTERS.

Ann Arbors' Vertex Coffee Roasters will be expanding to a new location in Ypsilanti on 307 N River St. This is the former location of Cultivate Coffee.

"We were offered to move into that space as a second location. Myself, and some of my team members used to work there, and it felt like a good opportunity, which felt close to our hearts," Kara Sato, co-owner of Vertex, said.

Vertex intends to provide an approachable and welcoming environment to its customers.

"We try to make it as welcoming as possible, we try to remember people's names and answer any questions they may have about coffee or what we offer," Sato said.

As of now, Sato and her team do not intend to add any more locations into the franchise, citing they want to stick with just two locations.

"Our first location is pretty small, so we are excited to have more space and be open to our location by expanding on what we can provide," Sato said.

While Vertex's menu mostly consists of items such as mochas, lattes, and espressos, they offer more than just

coffee on their menu.

"Our specials are really fun, so people can try multiple drinks if people are into the sweeter drinks. Which includes the zero-proof bar that can give people plenty of variety," Sato said

"In Ypsilanti, we do plan to have more food options like toasts and sandwiches and gluten-free the zero-proof bar. The zero-proof bar, which is non-alcoholic cocktails and non-alcoholic wine, and separate from that we offer for anyone interested in switching from coffee to a different type of sweeter drink," Sato said.

As of now, there is no official date on when Vertex will be opening in Ypsilanti, but Sato hopes to have moved by early spring.

Opening the Ann Arbor location in 2019 and now co-owning Vertex with her wife, Mackenzie Sato is grateful for how far they have come.

"Honestly it's unbelievable when I step back and think about it, and it's one of those unreal things that's been really wonderful," Sato said.

What's the Move? Feb. 19 - 25

HUNTER JOHNSTONE
NEWS REPORTER

Building a Culture of Caring - Feb. 19
As a part of the Brown Bag Mental Health and Equity Speaker Series, Dr. Cirleen DeBlaere and Dr. Jesse Owen will speak at this event in Porter College of Education, room 203. The event runs from 12:15-1:30 p.m. Lunch will be provided.

Flutist Jenny Shin Performance and Master Class - Feb. 20
See international flutist Jenny Shin perform and present a masterclass. The event will be held in the Alexander Music Building, choir room 109 from 2-4 p.m.
Star Lecture: Dr. Barbara Patrick - Feb. 20

Want to learn more about the Civil Rights Movement in the Deep South? Get on Zoom and listen to professor Barbara Patrick discuss economic, political, and social disparity and the strategies used to challenge racial segregation and discrimination. The event is running from 6:30-8 p.m. and is LBC approved.

Kings Casino Night - Feb. 21
Test your luck and play the odds to win prizes when hanging out with friends and playing card and tabletop games. Located in the Student Center Ballroom from 7-9 p.m., there is no cost and free snacks are provided.
PASIÓN ESPAÑOLA: Wind Symphony Concert - Feb. 21

Hear the many styles of music reflected in the dances of Spain from 7:30-9 p.m. in Pease Auditorium. The concert is free to attend and LBC approved.
"Black Intifada: The Roots and Legacies of Black and Palestinian Solidarity" - Feb. 22

Attend the in-person panel discussion or watch through Zoom livestream to learn more about Black and Palestinian solidarity. The event will be located in the Student Center Auditorium from 6-8 p.m.
EMU Orchestra Festival - Feb. 23
See high school orchestras from across the state perform in this event hosted by the EMU Symphony Orchestra. The event will be held all day in Pease Auditorium.

The Great Lakes Comic-Con - Feb 23-24
Meet your favorite comic book writers and artists at The Great Lakes Comic-Con in the The Macomb Expo Center of Macomb Community College. The event runs from 5-9 p.m. on Friday, and from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday. The event cost ranges from \$20-40, but children 10 and under are admitted for free.

Black and Palestinian solidarity discussions to be hosted at EMU

VICTORIA SMITH
CONTENT EDITOR

Eastern Michigan University's Department of Africology and African American Studies will be hosting the event "Black Intifada: The Roots and Legacies of Black and Palestinian Solidarity" on Thursday, Feb. 22.
The event will begin with a lecture by keynote speaker Nadia Alahmed, an assistant professor of Africana Studies and Middle Eastern Studies at Dickinson College. She will speak on the history of the Black and Palestinian solidarity movement, covering the Black Power and Black Arts Era through the current day.
"I am very grateful for the opportunity to speak at Eastern Michigan University," Alahmed said. "I cherish every chance to speak on Palestine."
Following her lecture, a panel discussion will take place with three panelists: Professor Emeritus Charles Simmons, who previously taught at Eastern, attorney and organizer Sahar Faraj, and cultural organizer Owólabi Aboyade.
Together, these panelists have had involvement in the struggles for Palestinian liberation, in the struggles for Black liberation in the United States, and in the anti-colonial movements in Africa. They will share personal experiences, perspectives, and lessons with attendees, in addition to

answering any questions that may be asked surrounding Palestine and the solidarity movement.
"We wanted to have people that could speak from different experiences, different eras, and to provide kind of a broad depth of experience and analysis of various eras of struggle," Peter Blackmer, assistant professor of Africology and African American Studies at Eastern, said.
One of the reasons Blackmer was inspired to organize this panel was due to the current war in Palestine.
On Oct. 7, 2023, a militant group attacked a music festival in Israel. AP News reported that around 1,200 individuals were killed and around 250 hostages were taken. Israel then declared it would launch a war against Hamas.
Israel's response has led to international protests. A temporary, four-day cease-fire was enacted on Nov. 24, 2023, with attacks resuming after the period. On Jan. 11, South Africa brought a case forward to the U.N. International Court of Justice, accusing Israel of conducting genocide.
The Biden Administration stated support for Israel on Oct. 9, 2023. The Administration also announced on Oct. 18, 2023, that \$100 million would be provided for humanitarian assistance for Palestinians.
Additionally, the House of Representatives passed House Bill H.R.6126 on Nov. 2, 2023, which was brought forward to provide Israel with \$14.5 billion in aid, but was not passed by

the Senate. A separate foreign aid package for \$95 billion was brought forward and passed in the Senate on Feb. 13, which would include \$14.1 billion toward aid for Israel, but has yet to pass in the House.
The "war against the Palestinian people is being carried out with our tax dollars with the complicity of the U.S. Government... It's being done with our support as residents of the United States," Blackmer said. "We have a real stake in the human rights violations... upon the Palestinian people and a responsibility to intervene."
Another reason for the creation of this event, Blackmer said, was to bring attention to the shared experiences among African Americans and Palestinians, such as oppression, colonialism, and exploitation.
"The conversations about Black and Palestinian alliance, its lessons and future possibilities is as crucial as ever," Alahmed said.
Blackmer said that he hopes the event will help students and community members learn more about the traditions of Palestinian resistance, as well as understand the stake of involvement in solidarity work with Palestinian liberation movements.
The panel will run from 6-8 p.m. in the Student Center Auditorium. For those who cannot attend in person, the panel will be streamed online using the platform Zoom.

EMU faculty examine cultural challenges impacting Ukraine refugees

CHARLES BOYKINS
NEWS REPORTER

As millions of Ukrainians leave their homes due to the Russian-Ukraine war, many of those who have migrated have had difficulty adjusting to communication and cultural differences. Eastern Michigan University College of Business faculty, David Victor, who has a Ph.D. in business communications, Kim Barker, who has a Ph.D. in organization development, and former lecturer Christine R. Day, who has a Ph.D. in organizational communication, collaborated on research focused on Ukrainian refugees fleeing from Russia.
Titled "Global Advances in Business Communication," this academic paper focuses on how cross-cultural communication challenges impact relations with Ukrainian refugees and EMU staff. This study interviewed 18 individuals between June and November of 2023 and dug into common themes such as language, managing chaotic change, loss and grief.
"We really wanted to share and hopefully develop an understanding of what these refugees have been through. Our goal is that people will be a little kinder and more considerate when encountering refugees from anywhere ... it's important to remember that for most, especially the Ukrainian refugees,

that this was not their choice and that they are victims of some pretty horrible circumstances," Barker said.
Dealing directly with the Ukrainian refugees, these three professors came face to face with many realities that these refugees deal with.
To properly conduct this study, the faculty had to find willing participants who also reflected the multi-ethnic country. According to Victor, this study had to be cross-cultural as Ukrainians include minority groups such as Tatars [a Turkic ethnic group], Russian-speaking Ukrainians, and more.
"Ukraine, however, is huge, the largest country in size besides Russia itself. Once Ukrainians began to flee the violence and destruction, the wide range of nations, each with different cultures and languages, was a given," Victor said.
Conducting this study placed the reality of refugee life front and center to the faculty members.
"The sense of grief that these refugees share was overwhelming. Imagine for a minute that one day you are told to leave your home and it's questionable whether you'll be back. Your job is gone and you have to leave your partner behind and take the kids to another country in the hopes that this action will spare your lives," Barker said.
The study made a notable effort to use certain wordage.

Emphasizing the word "people" so the importance of this study does not get lost within the statistics and data.
"We wanted to give a sense of what the Ukrainian refugee situation was like. We can give data of the numbers killed or wounded, the numbers fleeing, the total asylum request applications, but such data are numbing after a while," Victor said.
"People with lives and hopes and dreams that came crashing down because a neighboring aggressor thought it could invade without consequence. Whether or not Ukraine successfully continues to hold off the much larger Russian forces, the issue of the people displaced has to remain at the center stage," Victor said.
According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, there are currently 6,479,700 million Ukraine refugees globally.
"I hope that the stories our interviewees shared encourages people to look again at Ukraine and become involved," Victor said.
For those interested Victor provided charities dedicated to helping the refugees, such as Women Take the Wheel, Nova Ukraine, and United Help Ukraine
Readers can observe their findings online at <https://commons.emich.edu/gabc/>.

Correction:

An article on TRUEMU Night published in the Jan. 15, 2024, print edition contained errors in quotations and web addresses. The first quotation in the article should have read:
"This has become an annual event," Mortier said, "and we know there are quite a few alumni, students, faculty and staff throughout Metro-Detroit who would want to celebrate the school we love and a local sports team, while also helping families and students."
Other quotations were removed or paraphrased to correct errors.
The corrected article is available on The Eastern Echo website: [Detroit Red Wings partner with EMU to host TRUEMU Night for faculty and students](https://www.easternecho.com/news/truemu-night) | The Eastern Echo.

SPORTS

Nia Shack: From EMU to Super Bowl Halftime Stage

ELENA DAVIS
SPORTS WRITER

In the world of dance, the journey from obscurity to the spotlight is often a tale of perseverance, passion, and seizing every opportunity that comes one's way. For Nia Shack, a dancer hailing from Clinton Township, Mich., this journey has been nothing short of extraordinary.
From the quiet streets of her hometown to the bustling stage of a halftime show featuring some of the biggest names in music, Shack's story is one of determination, family support, and the transformative power of dance.
Shack's path to success began with a simple audition - a one-minute video of her dancing to an Usher song, accompanied by a few photos. The audition process was demanding, requiring hours of practice and unwavering dedication, but Shack's perseverance paid off when she received the long-awaited acceptance letter. However, the road to the spotlight was met with challenges.
"I stayed in Vegas for two weeks, during which we had eight rehearsals. Rehearsals ran for 7-10 hours a day, and our phones were locked in pouches during rehearsals to prevent any information about the show from getting out," Shack said.
One of the biggest hurdles Shack faced was the lack of provided travel and housing accommodations. Determined, she and her family took matters into their own hands, arranging for their stay at a charming Airbnb in Las Vegas, the city where dreams are made and stars are born.
It was in Las Vegas that Shack's journey

took an unexpected turn. Not only did she have the opportunity to share the stage with icons like Usher, Alicia Keys, H.E.R., Ludacris, and Lil Jon, but she also had the chance to meet them face-to-face. However, the excitement of this once-in-a-lifetime experience was tempered by the need to sign a non-disclosure agreement, prohibiting Shack from sharing her involvement until after the halftime show had concluded.
"I have a deep love and passion for



PHOTO CREDIT: NIA SHACK

performing and commercial dance, which is what inspired me to pursue this opportunity. Anyone who knows me personally knows: I love going to concerts," Shack said. "I have seen amazing artists, and as a dancer I always pay close attention to the backup dancers at concerts. They add so much energy and excitement, bringing the shows to life," Shack said when discussing her love for dancing and what inspired her to audition.
Shack's passion for dance began in her senior year of high school when she searched for inspiration on Instagram. There, she discovered Eastern Michigan University's dance team and decided to take a leap of faith by auditioning. Three years later, she finds herself not only a member of the team, but also at the center of one of the most memorable highlights of her college life.
"Being a part of EMU's dance team has been an incredible and fulfilling journey. It has been the most memorable highlight of my college life and has provided me the opportunity to meet some of my best friends," Shack said.
Being part of EMU's dance team has been more than just a hobby for Shack; it has been a journey of self-discovery and growth. From the grueling rehearsals lasting up to ten hours a day to the friendships forged along the way, every moment has been a testament to Shack's resilience and unwavering dedication to her sport.
As Shack reflects on her journey from Clinton Township to the bright lights of Las Vegas, she is grateful for every twist and turn that has led her to where she is today. As she continues to chase her dreams, she does so with passion, perseverance, and a supportive family by her side.



Check out weekly sports recaps and more features on our website!

EMU women's hoops falls short to Northern Illinois

BLAKE MCQUEARY
SPORTS EDITOR

The Eastern Michigan University women's basketball team tipped off retro arcade day inside the George Gervin GameAbove Center not as planned, falling short to Northern Illinois University, 61-52, on Saturday, Feb. 17.
The Eagles would see three members combine for 39 points as junior guard Lachelle Austin (Redford, Mich.) would lead EMU with 19 points, junior center Tayra Eke (Madrid, Spain) finished with 12, and junior forward Treasure Thompson (Joliet, Ill.) chipped in eight points.
Austin's 19-point showing would mark her fifth game this season with double-digits in scoring and 30th of her career.
As a team, EMU would pull in 44 total rebounds as Eke notched eight rebounds while senior forward Kennedy Myles (Cincinnati, Ohio) would finish with 13 rebounds. Offensively the Eagles would grab 15 rebounds to convert eight second-chance points as sophomore guard Dara

Capaldi (East Detroit, Mich.) hauled in nine rebounds.
Posting eight rebounds in the matchup, Eke sits just 44 boards away from a career milestone of 500. The Madrid native also added two blocks on the day, as she is now just eight blocks away from the 150 milestone.
The Huskies would post a better shooting night compared to the Eagles as NIU shot the ball 23-for-66 (34.8%) from the floor and 5-for-17 (29.4%) from three-point range as EMU shot 20-for-70 (28.6%) from the floor and 5-for-22 (22.7%) from beyond the arc.
Additionally, NIU would outscore the Eagles in the paint, 30-26.
With the win, the Huskies improve to a 12-12 overall record and 5-17 in Mid-American Conference play while the Eagles fall to 6-17 on the season and 2-10 in MAC play.
Next up, EMU will travel I-94 for an intrastate rival battle against Western Michigan University on Wednesday, Feb. 21. Tipoff for that game is scheduled for 7 p.m. and will be streamed on ESPN+.

Around The Community



PHOTO CREDIT: JAY MANEA
AS PART OF EMU'S EVENTS FOR BLACK HISTORY MONTH, PROFESSOR MOLEFI KETE ASANTE VISITS CAMPUS TO GIVE A LECTURE ON AFROCENTRISM ON FEB. 14 AT THE STUDENT CENTER.



PHOTO CREDIT: AMEERA SALMAN
ELYANNA PERFORMING HER MUSIC AT THE MAJESTIC THEATRE ON FEB. 13.



PHOTO CREDIT: MILES CORLEY
FABIOLA GAYOSSO TAKES THE STAGE AS THE VOCALIST FOR THE JAZZ BAND.



PHOTO CREDIT: MADISON CANTRELL
EKE (#32) HAS THE BALL AND IS LOOKING TO PASS AT THE EMU WOMEN'S BASKETBALL VS. NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY ON FEB. 17.



PHOTO CREDIT: MILES CORLEY
LIFEGUARD ERIKA, LEFT, PLAYED BY LANEY BASS, AND DONTRELL JONES, III, PLAYED BY CHANDLER GRAHAM, PERFORM IN EMU THEATRE'S "DONTRELL, WHO KISSED THE SEA" DURING DRESS REHEARSAL.



PHOTO CREDIT: MILES CORLEY
THE WHOLE ORCHESTRA IS ON STAGE AS THEIR DIRECTOR CHAD HUTCHINSON WALKS TO HIS PODIUM TO CONDUCT THE EMU SYMPHONY BAND.



PHOTO CREDIT: JAY MANEA
EMU'S TRINITY MACY FINISHES WELL ON HER UNEVEN BARS PERFORMANCE ON FEB. 18.



PHOTO CREDIT: MADISON CANTRELL
GHOSSTY PERFORMS AT EMU'S CAMPUS LIFE AND LGBTRC DRAG SHOW "SELF LOVE AND DRAG" ON FEB. 13 IN THE STUDENT CENTER.



Check out more photo galleries on our website!



PHOTO CREDIT: MADISON CANTRELL
ACUFF (#5) SHOOTS AT THE EMU MEN'S BASKETBALL VS. BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY GAME ON FEB. 17.



PHOTO CREDIT: JAY MANEA
CHIMI DOLKER SHERPA AND NADIA SILVIA DANCE AT COLORS IN HARMONY EVENT.



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